Albertans Speak Out About Families

THE PREMIER'S COUNCIL IN SUPPORT OF

ALBERTA FAMILIES

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The dedication and enthusiasm you have shown in participating with us, your willingness to trust in our commitment to our task, on behalf of Alberta families, and your continuing support, are sincerely valued and much appreciated.

The Premier's Council recognizes that everyone has a stake in resolving the issues that are disruptive to families.

1. Introduction

The Premier's Council in Support of Alberta Families was established in 1990 to advise government on how its policies and programs affect Alberta families. An important aspect of the Council's mandate is to "seek practical advice from all Albertans on how government can strengthen the family." The consultation process started with the Lieutenant-Governor's Conference, held in February, 1990, prior to the establishment of the Council. At that conference, delegates identified issues which were consolidated into eight themes, as follows:

1. A need to respond to changing cultural values.
2. A need for a stronger focus on prevention.
3. The importance of balance between work, leisure, and family responsibilities.
4. The benefits for families of providing coordinated services and ensuring linkages between programs.
5. A need for responsive systems to address family needs.
6. The need for community involvement and partnerships.
7. The recognition of a need for lifelong learning.
8. The critical need of families to have financial health, as well as the skills and knowledge necessary for success.

Further discussion on these themes, by all Albertans, was recommended by conference delegates. While public participation requires time and investment in seeking agreement, the Council recognizes that everyone has a stake in resolving the issues that are disruptive to families. Through the public consultation process, the Council sought to create awareness, involve communities in the process, facilitate discussion about the challenges of living in families, develop a vision for a preferred future and build momentum for action.

2. The Public Participation Process

The process was designed to maximize opportunities for public participation and to allow the flexibility for each community to design an approach that would best meet local needs.

The consultation process was designed to maximize community involvement and participation. The province was divided into fourteen geographic areas. Within each geographic region, planning groups were established. These planning groups designed the process for their own regions which would meet the needs of the community. This was done within the guidelines provided by the Premier's Council. The Council developed specific questions, within the eight themes, for public discussion (see Appendix A). Funding was provided by the Council to cover the costs of the forum or forums held in each region.

Twenty-four forums were held throughout the province (see Appendix B), with three areas declining to participate. The invitation to be involved in planning regional forums was issued by the Council to Family and Community Support Services.

Flexibility was provided to communities in the way forums were conducted, resulting in quite a variety of formats. However, consistency was maintained in the questions that were addressed and in the reports that were submitted. Those who could not attend a forum but wished to provide input, were invited to participate in informal discussion groups, using a discussion guide developed by the Premier's Council. Some regions combined the discussion guide approach with forums (see Appendix C).

Over 3,000 Albertans responded to the invitation to participate.

As a result of this process, the Premier's Council received nineteen community reports, two hundred and four discussion guide responses, and seventy-five written submissions from individuals and groups. All in all, the process involved approximately three thousand Albertans (see Appendix D).

Two additional forums were conducted by the Premier's Council in Support of Alberta Families. One was designed to obtain input from Non Government Organizations and was held on September 5th, 1991. The second forum was held on November 14, 1991 with invited delegates from the Indian and Metis communities. The two reports, "Visions of the Future for Families in Alberta: Non Government Organizations Forum" and "Forum on Indian and Metis Families" are both available from the Premier's Council.

Finally, as part of this process, the Premier's Council reviewed a variety of reports and briefs, which were examined for their application to the issues, even though they had not specifically been developed as a response to the issues. These reports include briefs from both federal and provincial initiatives, as well as letters received by the Council (Appendix D).

2.1 Timeline

The public consultation process was initiated in Youngstown on April 27, 1991 and concluded in Calgary on February 1, 1992. The timeline was extended from the original date of December 1, 1991, at the request of Edmonton and Calgary, who needed additional planning time. Submissions were still being received by the Council as late as April 15, 1992. All have been carefully reviewed and considered in the preparation of this report.

2.2 Public Perspectives on the Process

Participants expressed appreciation for the opportunity to communicate their concerns and to share their thoughts and perspectives with others.

The community consultations provided an opportunity for Albertans to come together in a common dialogue, to identify the family issues that affect them. Hundreds of individuals came together in forums and discussion groups that were held across the province, to share their concerns, listen to others and learn about family issues. They responded to the invitation to participate with enthusiasm, dedication and commitment. Private citizens wrote letters and interested organizations prepared briefs on the subject of family life in this province. Albertans spoke with passion, conviction and integrity. They spoke openly and honestly about their thoughts and feelings. They demonstrated a willingness to listen to other points of view. A facilitator from Lacombe noted the tremendous investment made by participants, and commented that *"it was the most powerful facilitation I've ever had with a group - the people did not want to stop."*

There were benefits to the community, as reflected in a comment from a planner in Hanna, who indicated, *"From a programming prospective it provided new ideas and directions about what families want. It was a good opportunity to network and form new partnerships in the region."*

While concerned that action be taken on the recommendations, comments on the importance of the process itself were reflected in observations such as the following:

"I believe this forum is an acknowledgement by the government that indeed families are important."

–Airdrie participant

"The evening proved to be a positive experience - an evening that got a lot of people talking about families and family issues, and thinking about the future of Alberta families. Where we're at - where we'd like to be - the direction on how to achieve that vision."

–Camrose Forum Report

The realization that others shared similar concerns was also a revelation for some people. A participant from Killam indicated that *"I didn't realize that there were so many other people who cared about families."*

While the government has an important role and action is desired, there is much that can be done by individuals and communities.

"Others spoke about the importance of the process continuing. This first community consultation (public forum) should not be the last. The needs of families and service agencies would be well served if ongoing gatherings like this could be held in each northern community. The people who participated in this discussion all found it worthwhile. 'I liked the sharing of ideas and the fact that the Premier's Council was going to listen to what we had to say' said another participant. The same thought was echoed by many others."

–High Level Report

Others reflected on the importance of the dialogue to their own communities. As noted in the Red Deer report, *"We felt this project has been worthwhile with much of our success being attributed to our rather unique approach ... our efforts related to families must continue. The final report will not only be of value to Council but will serve as a local planning tool for some of the local action strategies which will be undertaken in the future."* Drumheller reported that, *"The information has already proven to be of value to our program in Drumheller."*

Perhaps the strongest sentiment, however, was focused on the need for action. As a participant in Rockyford noted, *"I trust that this has not been a waste of time – we need changes and I'd like to see some changes occur in the very near future and hope that our children will benefit soon."*

3. What We Heard

While there were a great range of opinions and a considerable diversity of views, the prevailing theme reflected a desire to improve the quality of family life. There were no dispassionate views, there were no disinterested participants; those who took part in the process did so with a clear desire to make things better for themselves, their families and their communities.

Participants recognized that there are no easy answers to the challenges that face families today, but there are many areas on which agreements emerged.

There was also a keen awareness of the many challenges that face families today. Some of the forces which serve to weaken families are not easily resolved, nor is there always consensus on how to resolve them. Similarly, a shared vision on how to strengthen and support families is not always easily attained. Participants concluded that there are no easy answers, they recognize the limitations of resources and believe strongly that everyone must work together to share in the responsibility of supporting families. However, despite the wide range of views and the diversity of perspectives, there are many areas on which agreements emerged. This report is based on those areas of broad agreement, while acknowledging differences about basic principles, where they exist.

Two things became evident as we listened to the discussions and opinions of Albertans. First, the community consultations revealed that there are a whole host of concerns which challenge family well-being. Second, the discussions highlighted the fact that all individuals have a stake in the issues of family life because everyone is a member of a family.

There is strong agreement that the role of family cannot be replaced by any other social structure.

Families, more over, exist in many forms and perform a variety of functions. It is clear from the submissions received by the Premier's Council that not all Albertans are comfortable with this diversity. However despite the differences, there is strong agreement that the role of the family cannot be replaced by any other social structure or institution. The importance of families in influencing our lives, determining to a large extent who we are as individuals and influencing the way we view the world, each other and ourselves, all contribute to the importance of sustaining and enhancing family life in this province.

A. Cultural Values

How do we foster cultural values that allow families to thrive?

There is a clear recognition that fundamental changes in society have had a tremendous effect on families. Things are not like they used to be. Some lament the loss of the traditions and values of an earlier time, while others accept change as a necessary step towards a new society. Despite this clear difference of opinion, the vast majority acknowledge that families are struggling to adjust to changing cultural values.

There are three main areas of concern which have emerged from the consultations: the definition of families; the growing confusion over shifting family roles and responsibilities; and the concern about the erosion of moral and spiritual values in families.

While there is no consensus on a precise definition of family, there is strong agreement on the importance of strengthening family life and the importance of caring, nurturing and commitment in relationships.

Definition of the Family

Perhaps no area evoked more strongly held views in the entire consultation process than did the definition of the family. While some seek a definition that implies an ideal family type, others prefer to include a wide range of living arrangements, for which they hope to gain social approval. The definition most often proposed in the submissions received, is that a family should be defined as two or more persons related by birth, marriage, or adoption. There are others who argue for an extension of this definition to include those who function as family members for a significant period of time, although they may not be related. An example of this would be children in long term foster care. Many express concern that the meaning of the family would be lost if any group of individuals could define themselves as family.

While no consensus emerged on the definition of family, there is overall agreement that the contribution that families make to society, in providing security, acceptance and support to their members, must be maintained and enhanced. There is also general agreement that family well-being is reinforced when caring, nurturing individuals are committed to an ongoing relationship.

Changing Roles and Responsibilities

Family roles have undergone changes, yet many family responsibilities remain the same.

The more things change, it seems, the more confusing life becomes for families. Family roles have undergone change in the past few decades, yet certain long-standing family responsibilities have remained the same. The children still need to be raised, the bills still need to be paid, and men and women in families still need to come to some understanding as to how all this is to be done. At present, there is a blurring of roles, as family members have taken on new responsibilities. These changing roles have caused much confusion about what is expected and what is no longer accepted or valued in society. The roles of provider and nurturer are no longer seen as the domain of one parent or of one gender.

What has changed is that family roles are no longer clearly the domain of one parent or of one gender.

With more and more women in the labour force, there is an emerging conflict for those women who opt for a full-time parenting role. Many point to an apparent lack of recognition for parents who choose to stay at home to raise their children rather than pursue a career outside the home. It is argued by many that while working to provide for the family is acknowledged as an important task, caring for the family inside the home is generally not viewed as valuable. *"Full-time parenting is considered as a low or demeaning occupation by many parents, and society,"* according to an Edmonton discussion group. Clearly, in a society where work is measured by how much one earns, parents who stay at home to raise their children lament that they are given far less respect than those in the workplace.

The impact of divorce has had significant implications for all members of the family, including non custodial parents and grandparents.

Roles are further complicated as a result of changes that occur in relationships after a divorce or the loss of a parent, or through the introduction of new family members by remarriage. Difficulties around economic support and access to children were raised in several submissions. Where roles and responsibilities have not been adequately clarified, or non-custodial parents are denied access, difficulties arise.

The pain of unresolved relationships may also impact extended family members, particularly grandparents who are sometimes denied access to their grandchildren.

Options recommended to solve these problems range from increasing legislative requirements for more access, to mediation and counselling.

There is a need for a new balance between individual rights and social responsibility.

There is an additional concern that the emphasis on individualism and individual rights have come to be valued more than responsibilities and contributions to others. There is a sense that people tend to focus on their rights, while sometimes neglecting their responsibilities. It is argued that people tend to emphasize the roles that others are expected to play, rather than focusing on what they should do themselves. When it comes to families, it is argued that the diminished role of personal responsibility has resulted in the weakening of families. Some are of the view that people demand too much for themselves and do too little for others. Many advocate a renewed emphasis on sharing and caring, where people consider their actions in light of their responsibility to others and to the larger society - a society which values people, in terms of their social contribution.

The parenting role is undervalued by society. The parental role should be honoured and supported.

As a Calgary discussion group noted, *"to us, having and raising children is the most important contribution to a better world."* Parents need to be recognized for the vital role that they play, and parenthood needs to be esteemed as a valued "profession". It is frequently mentioned that all family responsibilities are important, but none more important than the responsibilities of parenthood. Most argue that there is no training or education required to become a parent, yet it is can be a most awesome responsibility. It is clear from the majority of submissions, that undertaking the responsibility of raising children should be more valued and recognized as one of the most important contributions to our future as a province.

Moral and Spiritual Values

> *"...the job of parenting is very important but it is made difficult by the fragmented and competing claims of the larger society."*
>
> –Camrose Discussion Group

There is a yearning to reconnect with purpose.

There is a strong sense that we have lost some of the important moral and spiritual values which are viewed as essential to family well-being. A reaffirmation of values is seen to be required today, to respond to the many conflicting voices and influences which do not always reflect the views of parents or the values of family life.

Many envision a future in which institutions outside the family would be more supportive of what parents are trying to teach their children. Many reflected the view that, more and more, parents are fighting a losing battle against 'anti-family' influences, for the hearts and minds of their children.

Value based education (ethics, morality, and spirituality) is needed in our schools.

More parent involvement in education is proposed.

The institutions that were identified as being influential in having the lead role in promoting the moral and spiritual values of families, include the education system and the mass media. An increased emphasis on values-based education in the schools is cited as a way to strengthen the moral fabric of children and to add direction to their lives. It is argued that education can better assist young people, by teaching ethics, morality, and spirituality, and by serving to reaffirm time-tested family values. A stronger parental role in the educational process is called for, in order to ensure that families play a more active role in shaping the moral values that their children are taught in the schools.

The media should be held more accountable for the images and ideas presented to children.

Mass media is increasingly targeted as having a detrimental effect on families. It is widely held that the influence of television, videos, movies and other media often serve to undermine family values. Many suggest that the media should be made more accountable for the images and ideas that they present to children. Equally, many express the view that parents need to exercise greater control over materials and programs which adversely influence their children and undermine family values. It is also believed that parents need to take more time to share their own values with their children.

Parents need to give more attention to their importance in teaching values.

The rise of materialism is seen as a primary cause of family instability.

There is no clear agreement about the role that government should have in legislating morality.

While all acknowledge their personal responsibility and role in managing the impact of mass media, there is a strong plea for more responsibility on the part of the media itself. The energy required to boycott products and programs is limited, when considering the many demands placed on parents today.

Changing societal values, while embraced by some, tend to cause much anguish for others. The rise of materialism is viewed by many as a primary cause of family instability. While many households require two earners, concerns are expressed that some families become two income households by choice rather than necessity. Some argue that this has chipped away at the family foundation by reducing family time and by placing an emphasis on accumulating possessions and material wealth to achieve happiness or success.

The pursuit of status and recognition through careers is viewed as a sign of the times for Alberta families. People are often judged by what they do for a living. The contribution and meaning of work has to be put into perspective; balanced with other aspects of life. As one Calgary participant said, *"it seems that the traditional protestant work ethic has been perverted so that now too many people live to work rather than vice-versa."*

There are also several individual submissions, largely in the form of letters to the Premier's Council, which cite additional specific issues that are seen to undermine morality. These issues include abortion, youth promiscuity, pornography, liquor laws (extended hours and availability of alcohol), and nude dancing. Although not discussed, for the most part, in the community forums, the prevailing view of these letters is that such present day behaviours are not consistent with long-standing family values and should be stopped. While some see these behaviours as symptoms of the problem, others see these issues as a cause of the decay of moral values. The prevailing view reflected in these submissions is that government should act to strengthen families, by putting an end to these behaviours and thereby restoring the values of society. It should be stated, however, that others question the role of government in this regard and would prefer that change take place through increased personal responsibility.

Respect for Young and Old

> *"(Seniors) continue to be parents to their children. Having experienced life longer, they have much knowledge and wisdom to pass on to their children and grandchildren."*
> –Calgary Discussion Group

The wisdom and experience of elders need to be given greater recognition.

Many share the view that seniors need to be given greater recognition and respect in society. Some believe that their wisdom and experience can best be applied by working with the young, in the community. Elders have much to offer in educating youth in schools, volunteering as "adopted" grandparents, or participating in child care, (including their involvement in day care centres). As the role of the extended family has diminished in recent years, increased opportunities for active involvement by seniors would enhance these intergenerational ties and to reaffirm the value of seniors in society. The role of elders is of particular concern to the Indian and Metis communities.

Children are seen to be undervalued in our society.

In addition, many believe that children are undervalued in the society. They viewed this situation with considerable despair, recognizing the vital importance of childhood experiences to personal development. There are many factors identified in this devaluation of children. Perhaps the most significant is the lack of sufficient time and attention given to children. There is overall agreement that children need to be recognized as a positive force in society and must be appreciated to a greater extent than they are at present.

Build on extended family support where possible.

Access by grandparents to children of divorced or separated parents is demanded.

The importance of intergenerational ties between young and old is also reflected in concerns about the lack of access to children by many grandparents, especially in cases of divorced families. The importance of grandchildren maintaining a link to grandparents to help them appreciate their identity, ethnic roots, name and family, is also noted. Submissions from grandparents argue for stronger legislation, in order to protect their rights. Overall, there is agreement that the value of the young and the old can best be recognized by building upon the extended family as a source of support, wherever possible.

B. Preventive Services

How can attention be given to preventive services, without jeopardizing necessary rehabilitation and treatment services?

Family problems require a balance of promotion, prevention, treatment and rehabilitation strategies.

Participants generally endorse the belief that prevention is the most promising approach for supporting and strengthening families. Although prevention is not the primary focus in most of the submissions received, where it is discussed, clear agreement emerges on the importance of prevention activities. A balanced approach of promotion, prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation is called for in addressing family problems.

Much of the discussion revolves around promoting health and wellness in families and communities, and on empowering individuals through preventive education and skill development.

We need to promote the positive aspects of families...

Promoting Wellness

> *"Let's not define our goal as prevention (trying to define our goal by what it isn't). Let's try to define our goal as promotion of wellness (a positive or supportive goal) for families (and)communities."*
>
> –Airdrie Community Forum Report

The promotion of wellness is highlighted in a number of submissions. By building on the strengths of families and family members and by identifying ways in which families can be enriched, many believe that they can be helped to prosper. There is an expressed need to identify things that work, by placing more emphasis on healthy, functional families and their members. It is argued that the current preoccupation with dysfunctional families and family problems does little to enhance the positive aspects of families and family life. There is a sense that most families are in trouble; however, many suggest that this perception comes from focusing too much on what is wrong with families rather than on what is right. *"Government emphasis is on crisis families,"* according to a Youngstown group, *"and crisis families come across as being the norm."*

Too much focus has been put on what is wrong with families, rather than on what is right.

It is believed that with a greater emphasis on positive family life and family values, people will feel less despair and will take greater control over the health and well-being of their families. A public awareness campaign, emphasizing the positive aspects of families, is recommended. While many believe that this kind of positive focus on the strengths of families would help to counter many of the effects of the media which undermine the family, others would like to see more attention focused on ensuring that mass media and education reflect more positive values in support of family life.

Information should be provided which would help people make responsible choices for a healthy lifestyle.

There is also a belief that if people were more aware of lifestyle choices, they would take more personal responsibility for their decisions. Overall, people wish to see diminished reliance on professionals, or on the helping institutions. There is a strong belief that enhancing responsibility and awareness in individuals would help them to make better choices about the direction of their lives and that of their families. This public education role, it is argued, is essential to providing information on healthy lifestyles and on supporting programs which help to avoid problems.

An increased emphasis on building self-esteem should include a focus on competence, character, and accountability for one's actions.

An increased focus on self-esteem is also identified as a means of preventing many social ills. *"Family members who provide their children with structure, support, teaching and discipline will provide the basis for building Aboriginal children's self esteem,"* according to a participant at the Indian and Metis Forum. This perspective is also well stated by participants at the Red Deer forum, who concluded that, *"self-esteem in individuals of all ages is essential to developing and maintaining strong, healthy communities."* Increased self-esteem goes beyond the orientation of just feeling good about oneself. It includes a focus on competence, character and accountability for one's actions. Although the bulk of comments make reference to instilling strong self-esteem in children, others mention the benefits of developing self-esteem in all family members. The importance of providing opportunities for individuals to develop competence, take responsibility for their actions and receive affirmation for who they are, is highlighted as being essential to individual development and well-being.

Developing Family Life Skills

There is a strong call for increased support for the development of basic family life skills. It is believed that these skills need to be strengthened, in order to build strong families. Including more family living skills in the education of children and providing increased opportunities for lifelong learning for adults, would better prepare people to meet the challenges of

family life. Through educational strategies, participants are hopeful that problem areas can be addressed before they become crisis situations.

There is broad support for the provision of family life training, particularly to young Albertans. This training would be designed to prepare young people for their future roles by providing knowledge about family life, and by teaching the skills required for successful family living. Family life education would help others prepare the young to meet the challenges they will face in marriage, parenting and family relationships. Most believe that family life skill development should be given increased emphasis in the school curriculum. However, there are conflicting views about sex education. Some are in favour of clear and explicit information about sexual roles and responsibilities and about pregnancy prevention. Others feel that the schools should not be providing this information and that instead the focus should be on encouraging abstinence. Parental involvement in the choice of the information presented to their children is seen as essential.

Relevant family life education and skills training should be made more available.

Further, participants recommend that educational opportunities, in the area of family life education, be made more available for adults. In particular, topics dealing with relationships, marriage, parenting, and specific family problems are suggested. Although some believe that these programs should be mandatory for those planning to start families, most feel that these programs should simply be made more readily available than they are at present.

Increased promotion of healthy lifestyles, through lifelong education, is advocated for families. In particular, education in life skills, stress management, the avoidance of substance abuse, health promotion and financial management are identified as practical steps towards preparing individuals for their family responsibilities. These programs may also have the potential to reduce the need for more government and community support systems later on. The role of prevention through education is seen by many to hold much promise for many of the current problems of family life. There is a caveat, however, placed by some, on the quality of instruction. Preventive programs must be evaluated for their impact. Not all of them are seen as being effective. At their worst, some may even have a negative impact on family well-being.

Evaluate preventive programs for their impact.

We don't need more courses. More innovation and imagination are needed.

While the potential for education seems limitless, there is a corresponding concern that simply adding more courses will not solve family problems. The desire for more family life education needs to be balanced with the need for more innovative and imaginative ways of providing opportunities for learning in these areas. Barriers to education are compounded in small or isolated communities, particularly when dealing with sensitive subject matter. The quality of instruction, the lack of anonymity, the perceived stigma of attending parenting or other personal development classes, can all serve to keep people away from the classrooms. Other options for education outside of the classroom need to be identified, to make these courses more available, accessible and sensitive.

C. Work, Family and Leisure

What workplace supports are needed to assist in balancing work, family life, and the needs of individuals for leisure and recreation?

Working parents, both fathers and mothers, need opportunities to balance work and family through family oriented workplace policies.

The conflict between work and family life is viewed as one of the most critical issues affecting Alberta families. The many responsibilities that people have today are increasing the demands on their time. It is acknowledged that there are expectations to get ahead at the workplace; to be a loving husband or wife; to care for children and to pass on values and moral standards; as well as to spend time together as a family. Unfortunately, it is very difficult for most people to successfully balance these responsibilities. Given today's hectic lifestyle and pace of living, it is a struggle for most Albertans to balance work, family and leisure.

Concerns and issues centre around the difficulty in balancing time between work and family; the need for more flexibility in the workplace; providing greater opportunities for family leisure activities; and ensuring improvements in child care.

Balancing Time

"Society has a double standard for families–they want family oriented people but don't allow for sufficient family time."
–Edmonton Discussion Group

Many family members agonize over the fact that they simply do not have enough time to spend with their families. It seems as though *"families must make an increasingly strong effort to spend time together as a family unit,"* according to the Castor-Coronation Community Forum Report. The demands of work often take too much out of people. Parents and spouses are concerned about the little time or energy left over to give to their families. When the demands and pressures of life become too great, it appears that family time is the first thing to suffer.

Families are seen to have very few activities in which they participate together.

While the demands placed on working parents are largely identified as contributing significantly to this imbalance, there is a sense that everyone is too busy with their own activities to share family time with each other. Today's families are pulled apart as a result of the many extra-curricular activities, volunteer work, social activities, and other obligations and responsibilities that they have outside the home. Very often families are seen to have very few activities in which they participate together; they are drifting apart because of the time spent outside of the home and away from the family.

A Flexible Workplace

"Workplace and family are not mutually exclusive."
–Red Deer Forum Report

The future flexibility of the workplace is seen as a way of satisfying the competing demands of work and family. Most suggestions make reference to alternative work arrangements: job sharing; working at home; part-time employment, with benefits; flexible hours; and a shorter work week. These work alternatives are promoted as essential to improving the quality of family life, by addressing some of the child care issues and increasing employee satisfaction.

In particular, it is widely believed that the workplace should be more sympathetic to the needs of working parents. Employers must help employees to meet their parental obligations, such as having to take their children to necessary appointments or staying at home with them when they are sick. This sensitivity on the part of employers is viewed as essential in reducing the current stress placed on parents when they try to balance the competing demands of work and family. While the importance of productivity in the workplace is acknowledged, it is felt that sensitivity to family requirements would result in higher morale and ultimately higher productivity.

Employers must recognize that employees are also family members. We need to ensure that more time is available for families.

There is also some concern voiced regarding shopping on Sundays. It is suggested that reluctant employees are often required to work, at the expense of having one day a week just for family time. It is often difficult for family members to coordinate their schedules to spend time together. Many suggest that if businesses closed one day a week, this would result in more family time.

Family Leisure Activities

> *"Family time together is not enough; we as a community can encourage family leisure time and interaction by including all age groups instead of segregating them."*
>
> –Indian/Metis Forum Report

More emphasis needs to be placed on family-focussed community activities.

Expanded leisure opportunities and recreational alternatives for the entire family are advocated by many. With today's heavy emphasis on sport, the focus tends to be on individuals, rather than on families. It is argued that more emphasis needs to be placed upon family-focused community activities, rather than on those which stress individual participation. Many would like to see more parents participate in activities with their children, rather than merely sending them or being spectators.

There is also a call by some for extended and improved access to existing community recreational facilities. Some see a need for more low-cost recreational activities to be made available for families. In order to encourage more families to become involved, it is suggested that consideration be given to providing more activities for free, or at a minimal charge.

Assistance to working mothers needs to be balanced with support for stay-at-home mothers.

Universal daycare is by no means unanimously endorsed.

Child Care

> *"Lack of affordable quality day care in addition to the overwhelming responsibilities of mothers at home and in the workplace contribute to limiting work opportunities for women and personal stress."*
>
> –Fort McMurray Forum Report

Providing appropriate care for children is identified as a very important consideration in balancing the demands of work and family. Existing child care alternatives, according to many, are not readily available or are too expensive. There is support for enhancing the training of day care staff, to improve the quality of care and to ensure increased security and safety for children.

Many suggest that child care is not easily accessible for working mothers. It is proposed that daycare facilities should be provided closer to the workplace or on-site, in the case of larger employers.

While increased child care is given considerable support, making day care universal is by no means unanimously endorsed. Further, there is a general view that any assistance provided to working women in the area of child care should be equal to that provided to stay-at-home mothers. The Czar Family Forum Report exemplifies this view in their comment that, *"there should be a caregivers allowance–a tax exemption for the parent who chooses to stay at home with their children, of equal value to the tax exemptions and subsidies for day care currently in place for parents who choose to work."*

D. Coordination of Services

How do we ensure cooperation and collaboration at all levels to support families?

While the issue of coordination of services is not addressed directly in the majority of submissions to the Premier's Council, it is, nevertheless, a prevailing theme underlying many other issues. Where it is specifically addressed, it is more often expressed in submissions received from rural Alberta than from those in urban areas. The awareness of existing services and the availability of the supports that most urban Albertans take for granted, appear to be more of a problem for those living in rural Alberta.

The most commonly discussed themes include the awareness and accessibility of existing support services; the degree of effectiveness and efficiency in providing these services; and the equality and fairness of services to families.

Awareness and Access

> *"People don't know where to go for help."*
>
> --Bow Island Community Forum

People need to know what help is out there and how to get it when they need it.

Many voice the concern that there is a serious lack of awareness in the community about available services. Some feel that government, organizations and agencies must increase their efforts to inform people about existing services. Many individuals indicate that their problems are often compounded by the fact that they cannot easily find the support and resources they need or even to determine what support is available to them. Despite the fact that numerous resource directories are available in most communities, when families are experiencing difficulties, they are uncertain of where to look for help.

Single point of entry for all social services is suggested.

Overall, there is a request for more streamlined services, with access to assistance more easily achieved. Many point to the need for a single point of entry for all social oriented services, so that families would have only one place to go for help, when they need it. This integrated approach, particularly for those services provided by government, would help to ensure timely assistance. The current complexity and array of programs and services, with differing mandates, eligibility requirements, and intake procedures, make simplified access to support services all the more essential.

Efficiency of Services

> *"Departmental cooperation is essential in eliminating duplication. Sufficient service coordination at the community level is required."*
>
> –Non Government Organizations Report

Better communication and coordination could help to improve services and reduce costs.

There is a call for a better, fairer and more efficient distribution of services. Many argue that increased communication among departments, agencies, and organizations would reduce the duplication of programs and services, especially at the local level. This issue is particularly highlighted in the Non Government Organizations (NGO) Forum Report, where a whole new delivery of services to families is proposed. It is suggested that a coordinating body could more easily identify needs and provide solutions at the community level. As the NGO report describes it, this *"community based family service approach would encourage less competition for dollars, better use of dollars available and a larger role for those funding the programs locally."*

Service organizations are too specialist oriented. A more holistic approach is needed.

A further need for efficiency is emphasized in the concerns expressed over the growing specialization of services. It is argued that family members are often faced with the task of seeking out several agencies and departments to satisfy their particular needs. *"Service organizations are too 'specialist' oriented,"* according to the Fort McMurray Forum Report. There is an expressed desire to treat the whole person, rather than a particular symptom. *"There is less than a holistic approach to family support,"* according to the Lethbridge Forum Report.

Consolidating services under one roof, wherever possible, is also suggested as a potentially beneficial strategy. It is advocated that a more comprehensive approach would not only make services more efficient but would ensure that family needs are met more effectively.

Equality and Fairness

"We should provide more services to rural communities."
–Edmonton Discussion Group

Access to services in rural Alberta is difficult.

Closely associated with this desire for greater efficiency, is a growing concern that rural services may not be equal to those available in urban communities. *"Rural Alberta is being short changed,"* suggests the Youngstown Community Forum Report. Many rural participants note that services are often scarce in their communities, particularly in the areas of health care, mental health, and social work. Small numbers of professional staff divide their time and resources over a very large area and to a widely scattered population. Rural family members also encounter problems finding transportation to the cities, where they can attend specialized services. Better access to services at the community level would go a long way towards helping rural families.

The rules that govern funding decisions for special interest groups need to be reviewed.

In addition to concerns over inequities of service, there is also some concern about the fairness of the funding that is provided to special interest groups. Many individuals are particularly upset about the financial support provided to groups and organizations that they view as not being in support of families, or that they believe undermine family values. This is coupled with the concern that some groups, which they view as being more family-oriented, do not receive the same government support. According to one submission from Rimbey, *"the government should fund all pressure and service groups equally or not at all."* Some argue that the financial assistance that is directed to these special interest groups should be directed to family support agencies, or spent on bolstering existing services that are intended for families.

E. Responsiveness of Systems

How can systems, policies and programs be made responsive to and supportive of families?

Policies and service delivery systems need to be sensitive to family members and their individual needs.

Strong views are expressed, in several submissions, regarding the need for support systems to be more responsive and responsible to the people they serve. Systems include government departments, community agencies, service organizations and professional services, which provide assistance and support to families in need. While some of the comments refer to specific policies that appear to work against families, most comments call for changes in the delivery of services, which would ensure more sensitivity to family needs. The most frequently mentioned issues include a need for more individualized services, for a change in professional involvement, and for a greater emphasis on crisis-related services for families.

Customer-focussed Services

> *"The system must start where the individual is. Professionals must set their rules on the shelf in order to meet individual needs."*
>
> –Edmonton Agency Forum

Problems can get lost or ignored by bureaucracies. A plea is made for more "customer-focussed" services.

Many of the Albertans who expressed their views on this issue feel that existing structures and systems do not effectively respond to their individual needs. They feel that their problems are lost or ignored when they are dealing with bureaucracies. Often, services are geared to meet a specific client group or category, rather than the unique and personal needs of the individual. A plea is made for more individualized services, centred solely on needs. These more "customer-focussed" systems, moreover, should be flexible and capable of serving diverse family needs and structures.

The submissions which address this area also point to a need for clear and complete information regarding the rights and entitlements to services. Many suggest that service delivery is too often dependent on asking the right questions or by meeting strict eligibility requirements.

Another concern which emerged is that people who lack advocacy skills or resources either do not get service or may not receive the quality of service they should. They believe that services should be available and understood by all who legitimately require them. It should be mentioned, however, that this is balanced with the concern that some individuals take advantage of the system and receive assistance when they do not require it. While it is agreed that those who truly need help should receive it, there is strong agreement that there must be more accountability on the part of individuals receiving assistance.

Professional Involvement

> *"Professionals either lack resources to meet the needs of people who come to them–or appear not to care and fail to make the effort to communicate."*
>
> –High Level Forum Report

> *"Whatever the causes (political or financial or social) there often appears to be a serious 'lack of heart' or lack of genuine responsiveness to the needs of clients."*
>
> –High Level Forum Report

> *"Impersonal and ineffective responses can act as a catalyst leading to the break up of families..."*
>
> –Edmonton Discussion Group

There seems to be a growing mistrust of the many professionals who provide services to families.

There seems to be a strong mistrust of many of the professionals who provide services to families. A number of reasons are cited for this feeling of alienation. Many feel that those in authority interfere with, rather than support, families. Concern is expressed that some professional staff promote views which undermine the values held by the family. Some feel they are not well represented or understood by the people from whom they seek assistance. Most argue that the dignity and worth of every individual needs to be recognized and emphasized by the professionals entrusted with providing support and services to families. A strong plea is made for professionals to be more sensitive to families, by treating them with more dignity and respect.

Professionals must be sensitive to people, respect individual dignity and reflect community values.

According to an Edmonton discussion group, professionals *"very often see themselves and the rest of society with a 'them and us' mentality."* As a result of this perception, many contend that there is a need for a change in staff philosophy, so that a more personal face is put on the existing service delivery system. People seeking help often feel that they are not treated with respect or given information that is direct or useful. It is suggested that much of the current stigma and stress felt by service recipients could be reduced by a more caring and positive attitude, on the part of social service agencies. Family members basically want people who can help them by working with them to solve their problems.

The community should have more input in the hiring of professionals. The quality of these individuals is more important than their professional qualifications.

Many believe that the community should have more input into the hiring of professionals. Participants in rural communities, particularly, demand that professional people reflect community values, standards, and in certain cases, distinct cultures. *"Imported professionals,"* according to participants in the Rockyford forum, *"must respect the local community's moral values."* If it comes to a trade off between professional qualifications and the quality of the individual, they clearly opt for individuals who are caring and sensitive human beings, who would reflect community standards. The Indian and Metis Forum Report calls for more Native professionals to be trained with Native communities taking more control over the services that affect them.

Individuals, families and communities must reclaim some of their authority.

Despite the concerns voiced over the nature or quality of professional services, there is still recognition of the need for professionals to deliver services. The issue is more one of ensuring sensitivity in the delivery of services. Participants want to ensure that services for families are available when needed, but they want the right kind of services. Further, it is recognized that services for families need to be enhanced in other ways, such as through other community resources, e.g., there could be a stronger role for churches, volunteers, paraprofessional staff and support groups. The prevailing view is that, in the last several years, the balance has been tipped in favour of professionals and that individuals, families and community groups must reclaim some of their authority.

<u>Responding to Family Crisis</u>

> *"Crisis needs are too often met through an answering machine."*
>
> –Czar Family Forum Report

Existing services need to be reassessed and priorities established.

The inability of families to obtain help within a reasonable period of time is also raised as a significant concern. It is argued that family problems may escalate to crisis situations, as a result of the inability of service agencies to respond in a timely manner. Long waiting lists do not speak well for responsive systems, especially when the assistance is needed in times of crisis. Not everyone agrees, however, that the answer is simply to add more services. There is a recognition that existing services need to be reassessed and priorities need to be established, given the limited resources available.

More help is needed for the growing problem of abuse in families.

Greater community support is seen to be needed to help respond to the growing problem of abuse in families, both in terms of more support for victims and in better treatment services for perpetrators. It is believed that emergency shelters and long-term support services are inadequate to meet the needs of victims of violence.

... and for the increasing number of pregnant teens and teenaged parents.

Additional community supports are also being requested for pregnant teens and teenaged parents. Many believe that there is a serious lack of support for these young mothers and fathers. Of equal concern is the incidence of teen pregnancy and the importance of effective prevention initiatives, to lower the incidence of births to very young mothers.

F. Community Support of Families

How can communities be empowered to be more effective in supporting families?

There is a strong, prevailing sense throughout, that people need to take control over their lives, starting in their own communities.

The essential role of the community in supporting families is a theme addressed throughout many of the submissions. Albertans speak about the need for greater involvement at the local level and for increased participation by individuals in their neighbourhoods. There is a strong, prevailing sense throughout, that people need to take control over their lives, starting in their own communities.

Of those commenting specifically on community support, there are two main areas of discussion. First, the role of the community in supporting the family is highlighted. Many suggest that greater efforts must be made to mobilize local resources, by increasing self-help initiatives, support groups, volunteerism and networking in a community-based system of support. In particular, an increased role for community service providers is advocated, as an alternative to professional services.

There is a desire for communities to be more supportive places, where individuals reach out more to one another.

Second, there is a desire to develop communities in which families and individuals reach out more to one another, in a spirit of interdependence. These extensions to families, at the personal level, are seen to be essential. They can bridge the gap left by the lack of extended family support, as a result of smaller families, increased mobility and, in some cases, alienation from other family members.

People want to be involved in the decisions that will affect them.

Community-based Services

> *"The community as a whole should be a support group for families."*
>
> –High Level Forum Report

There is a call for more local involvement in the delivery of programs and services to families. Province-wide solutions are increasingly seen as being ineffective in responding to local circumstances. Also, it is suggested that programs designed to meet the needs of families in urban communities often do not fit the needs of rural and northern families. Increased community involvement could provide much needed flexibility in meeting unique geographic needs. By increasing opportunities for community involvement in determining how provincial funding is to be used, how programs are to be operated, and how people are to be served, it is believed that communities will be more effectively served. Overall, people want more involvement in the decisions which directly affect them.

There is also a call for increased involvement by people in the delivery of programs and services. It is suggested that competent volunteers, despite their lack of professional degrees, could be more extensively involved in supporting roles as paraprofessionals. With minimal training, individuals from the community, with relevant life experiences, are seen as valuable resources in responding to the needs of families. There are other areas in which local individuals could be of assistance, by providing basic help and referral to services, thereby reducing the workload of professionals. *"Communities need to develop creative ways of accessing people who are willing to help,"* notes an Airdrie group.

An Extension of Family

> *"Society must change its values so it's not just for one's self. We are here to help each other."*
>
> –Coutts Discussion Group

We can enrich family life by helping each other.

Many speak of a desire to re-define or to re-establish a sense of neighbourhood, to reduce the feeling of isolation in their communities. At one time, extended families served this role in people's lives. However, these familial supports are often no longer available, as families pull up roots and move elsewhere, seeking employment and other opportunities. Supportive neighbourhoods are viewed as effective substitutes or extensions for extended families.

Opportunities for self-help need to be expanded.

Community-based solutions in support of families are cited in a number of submissions. Examples abound of neighbourhood initiatives being established to respond to the everyday problems encountered by families. Programs which match community members with immigrants, newcomers, or families with special needs, (who lack the personal supports of extended family or friends to help them cope), are highlighted. Participants propose that these types of programs be expanded, wherever possible, to make them more readily available to more people in local communities.

In Indian and Metis communities, traditional healers, who are identified as respected sources of help in their communities, should be called upon to work with professionals, particularly in the areas of health and mental health. Also, extended families are identified as a source of support that should be accessed more than is currently done. This option is particularly identified in the case of foster care.

G. Lifelong Learning

How do we create an environment of lifelong learning to enable individuals, businesses, families and communities to manage change?

A strong investment in the importance of lifelong learning is evident in most of the submissions received by the Council. Education is often mentioned as being essential for strong families and family members. It is recognized that there is a close relationship between lifelong education and areas such as prevention. As mentioned in the Calgary Community Consultation Report, *"opportunities for skill development are often preventive, reduce the need for some support services, improve financial health and enable people to better balance work, family and leisure time."*

The theme of lifelong learning is centred around two main areas. First, there is a perceived need for individuals to develop personal, vocational and social skills, in order to better cope with and manage change in their lives. Second, there is a request that existing barriers to learning be addressed, so that education can become more affordable, accessible, and available to all family members.

Coping with Change

> *"(We) need to build in coping skills."*
>
> –Peace River Forum Report

Lifelong learning is the key...

Lifelong learning is viewed as an integral part of encouraging family members to function effectively in a changing environment. There seems to be a growing awareness about the importance of accessing learning opportunities throughout life, to help individuals to develop academic, occupational and social skills. It is felt that new knowledge and skills are constantly being required, to ensure increased competence in meeting the demands of a changing world. The perception that people need to learn how to cope with life's challenges is prevalent in the submissions received.

Education is perceived as essential in developing self-reliance, personal responsibility and empowerment.

It is widely agreed that knowledgable citizens, skilled workers, and capable individuals contribute to strong families. Education is perceived as essential in developing self-reliance, personal responsibility and empowerment. More learning opportunities would enable individuals to qualify for and compete in a highly skilled job market. They also prepare individuals for multiple careers throughout life. Education is also seen as a way of developing personal skills and competence, to help individuals to deal more effectively with the demands and challenges of life. Consequently, there is agreement that better educational opportunities for adults should be made more accessible, to provide individuals with the skills necessary to fulfil their various roles and responsibilities. Support for lifelong learning will require an investment by workplaces, as well as by institutions of learning.

It is important for individuals and families to have access to the skills and knowledge they need to succeed.

Many suggestions for lifelong learning relate to prevention, and are included in the earlier discussion of the theme, **Preventive Services**. In particular, specific programs on family relationships, marriage, parenting, health, financial management, and lifestyle issues are promoted. Further, more effort must be made to demonstrate the effectiveness of these programs. Overall, people believe that it is important for individuals and families at risk to be provided with the skills and knowledge required to cope with problems. They need help to respond to challenges before they threaten their families. The caution has been raised, however, that the deliverers of such programs must work in concert with the community, to ensure the quality and relevance of the content presented.

Barriers to Education

"Too often, needed education is not affordable."
--Fort McMurray Forum Report

There was some discussion regarding the barriers which prevent many people from taking courses or enroling in programs of interest. Primarily, these barriers centre around program availability, cost, child care, and other concerns. Individuals with low incomes or on social assistance, the unemployed, single parents and teenage mothers are identified as those who find it exceedingly difficult to pursue educational opportunities, or to find a better life for themselves and their families.

There are many problems associated with "trying to get ahead."

Many state that there are limited opportunities for lifelong education in the more remote regions of the province. Limited interest and low enrolments in courses can also limit the ability of organizations to offer courses in communities. Rural participants face special problems, unlike those of their urban counterparts, when trying to access continuing education opportunities. One problem which prevents many from becoming involved in family life education courses is the perceived stigma associated with certain types of self-help programs. Barriers to education in rural areas also include the distances required to travel, as well as the lack of transportation.

H. Financial Health

How do we facilitate families' financial health?

Family financial security is clearly dependent on a strong and vibrant economy.

The importance of adequate financial support for families is clearly identified in submissions received by the Premier's Council. Financial security is viewed as clearly dependent on a strong and vibrant economy. More opportunities for employment, reduced debt load on families, and assistance and support for families and family members who are without adequate income, are all identified as essential.

Issues and concerns surrounding the financial health of families focus on two main areas: fairness in taxation and benefits; and support and empowerment for low income families.

Family Taxation

> *"Taxation systems discriminate against double parent families who wish to have one parent remain at home or the single parent family where the parent has the desire to become self-sufficient."*
>
> –Fort McMurray Forum Report

Taxes should be fair, with improved tax incentives for stay-at-home parents.

Perhaps the number one concern regarding the financial health of families deals with taxation policies. Support for stay-at-home parents is strongly advocated. Some suggest that caregivers who choose to stay at home should be provided with benefits, allowances, and tax exemptions of equal value to those already in place for parents who choose to work. Concern is expressed that the option to stay home and raise children is no longer viable for many parents, due to today's economic realities. However, most believe that improved tax incentives for the stay at home parent would make this option possible for more families, to the benefit of all families.

The tax burden on families needs to be addressed.

Taxes are viewed as an ever increasing burden, which threatens family stability. The Airdrie Forum Report states that *"financial pressure is a leading cause of family stress, some of which could be reduced by lower taxes."* By reducing taxes for families, it is argued that families can take care of themselves, rather than paying the government to do so. Many are also concerned that more tax advantages may be available to common-law families than to married couple families. An evaluation of the current tax structures, and how they impact the family, is requested.

Support and Empowerment

> *"Individuals and families need to become more responsible for their own welfare."*
>
> --Medicine Hat Forum Report

Supports provided to families need to empower people to take care of themselves.

There is a broad consensus that the supports provided to families need to empower people to take care of themselves. While the need for assistance is clearly acknowledged, most prefer that this type of financial support be coupled with more accountability on the part of the recipient. According to the Grande Prairie Forum Report, individuals seeking assistance should be made accountable, so that *"social allowance programs would be closer to what was meant, that being a transitional support."* This emphasis on transition from financial dependence to self-sufficiency and independence is highlighted in a number of submissions. The perspective that people must give back, in some form, what they receive is strongly felt by many.

The problems faced by families whose incomes are not adequate to meet basic needs is of particular concern to many. Financial instability is viewed as a major factor in weakening the family unit. Many submissions called for expanded employment opportunities, an improved minimum wage, and greater access to education and training, to allow individuals to qualify for and compete in a highly skilled job market.

Support for lone-parent families, in particular, is specifically mentioned in a number of submissions. Many perceive that greater pay equity and the equality of opportunity for women would provide the most assistance, since lone-parent families are most often headed by women. It is suggested that equal pay for women would help to ease the burden for those families who rely on a single income to meet basic needs.

Transitional support and increased opportunities for employment and education are needed to ensure long-term financial security and independence.

We all need to be concerned about strengthening and empowering families as the foundation of our province.

The importance of breaking the cycle of poverty and strengthening low income families through empowerment strategies is highlighted in several submissions. Strong endorsement is given for enhanced educational and training opportunities for those who are unemployed or on social assistance. Concern is expressed about the role of government, which is sometimes perceived as creating barriers for individuals on social assistance who wish to become self-supporting. Perceived barriers to education need to be removed and training opportunities for those seeking a way out of their dependency, need to be put in place. Transitional assistance, from dependence on government to self-reliance, is called for, in order to provide people with the ability to make a better life for themselves and their families.

There are also some suggestions that a greater effort be made to better integrate new Canadians. Transitional support needs to be increased to provide immigrant families with economic security, language training, education, recreation, health and the social supports needed to ensure future self-reliance.

4. Action in Support of Alberta Families

"Some great ideas came up that proved that people care about families. Now we have to make them work."

–Youngstown Community Forum Report

It is evident that there are no simple solutions to the challenges facing Alberta families.

The community consultation process has assisted in preparing the groundwork for future action on behalf of families. It is evident from the submissions received and discussions held throughout the province that solutions are not simple and that ongoing dialogue is essential. Nevertheless, the process of consulting Albertans about the desired future for families confirmed not only the value of the dialogue itself, but areas of deep concern to families.

Government has a significant role to play in supporting families, but not the only role. Responsibility for making the required changes to support family well-being is seen to be a cooperative venture of families, communities, businesses, organizations, agencies and government.

Dialogue and cooperation among families, communities, businesses, organizations, and government are essential.

The concerns and issues expressed through the community consultation process focus on three key priorities. First, while recognizing change in society and in families, participants agree that there needs to be a reaffirmation of values which are supportive of families. Second, families need to be more actively promoted. Third, structural changes are required to meet family needs.

- **The Reaffirmation of Family Values**

Promoting positive family values is a matter of utmost priority.

There are many influences which currently appear to work in opposition to the values that are viewed as desirable for effective family functioning. There is an overall sense that we have lost our way in pursuing goals which are not necessarily supportive of family values.

While people acknowledge the importance of their own role and responsibility in promoting family values and working against the influences which undermine family life and family stability, they are looking to government to facilitate some of the changes to social policies and societal supports that are required to provide a more family friendly environment. Schools and the media are identified as having a significant role in affirming community standards and values.

Action is necessary to strengthen families and family values, and to provide healthy role models for the young.

- **The Promotion of Families**

There is strong agreement that action is necessary to instill positive family values in order to strengthen families. Effective role models can assist those who will take on family responsibilities in the future. By building on the strength of families and family members and by identifying ways in which families can be enriched, many believe that they can be helped to prosper.

Overall, people wish to see diminished reliance on professionals, or on the helping institutions. There is a strong belief that enhancing responsibility and awareness in individuals would help them to make better choices about the direction of their lives and that of their families. Increased promotion of healthy lifestyles, through effective lifelong education strategies, is promoted. Such activities need to build on family strengths. It is felt that promotion needs to focus on all age groups and to reflect the continuum from prevention to treatment.

The importance of providing opportunities for individuals to develop competence, take responsibility for their actions and receive affirmation for who they are, is highlighted as being essential to individual development which supports family well-being.

Government, businesses, communities and agencies must redirect their efforts to better support family life.

- **Structural Changes to Meet Family Needs**

Participants believe that government, businesses, communities and agencies must reevaluate their performance and redirect their efforts, with respect to their impact on families. Action is demanded for more responsive services, based on individual needs rather, than on categories of problems. A strong desire for more community involvement in the design and delivery of services is expressed. Also more neighbourhood and community supports are seen to be needed, with more community-based solutions to problems, including self-help initiatives.

In summary, families are asserting a strong desire for more family oriented values, while affirming the need for policies that will strengthen family life and help families in need. The consultation process focussed on finding areas of consensus about the issues that most need attention. The perspectives brought forward by participants in this process point us in a direction that can reaffirm family values and develop social polices and programs to support them.

We need to continue to strive to build on the emerging consensus.

Clearly, the emphasis of all briefs and discussions is that our future and that of our children can best be protected and supported by improving the quality of family life. The extent of interest and participation in the public consultation process reaffirms the commitment that exists to work together in our homes, schools, workplaces, churches, and organizations towards developing a more family-friendly environment.

It is clear, from the perspectives brought forward through this process, that there are many shared values, despite the pluralistic culture in which we live.

We need to continue to strive to build on this emerging consensus.

5. How the Council Has Responded

The Council has undertaken several specific initiatives to address issues raised through the consultation process.

The intent is to ensure that all government programs support family well-being.

- **Family Sensitive Public Policies**

  In order to ensure that policies are supportive of families in Alberta, the Council has introduced the Family Policy Grid, which is currently being implemented by all government departments. The Grid provides a framework of principles for departments to use to assess how their policies and programs affect Alberta families. Through the Family Policy Grid, the government has declared its intent to promote the stability and strength of Alberta families in everything that is done by government. It will be used to guide decision-makers in determining whether a program or service of government is family-oriented. It is also available as a tool for community boards and agencies that provide services to families.

  The Council will be working with departments in the implementation of the Grid. The Council will also review and report on the progress of departments' action plans to bring legislation, programs and services in line with the Grid.

  This is a significant initiative and the first of its kind in Canada.

The Awards program recognizes outstanding contributions to family life in Alberta.

- **Recognition and Promotion of Positive Role Models**

  The Council has introduced Service Awards in Support of Alberta Families, in recognition and appreciation of the important role that we all have in contributing to healthy family functioning. The awards were introduced for the first time in conjunction with 1992's Family Day, to accord recognition to organizations, associations, agencies, businesses, individuals and families who have demonstrated exceptional leadership in strengthening, supporting or nurturing families in Alberta.

The Council also promotes families through support for Family Day, a unique holiday which was introduced by the Alberta Government in February, 1989. Family Day provides communities with an opportunity to focus on the importance of families.

The Premier's Council is leading Alberta's involvement in the International Year of the Family, declared by the United Nations General Assembly for 1994. The Council will be working with communities, community agencies, and government departments to promote family values; to promote family sensitive policies in the workplace, in the community, and in government services; and to raise the profile of family issues, particularly during the International Year of the Family.

- **Raising Awareness**

The consultation process has assisted in raising public awareness.

The importance of raising public awareness about the realities of family life in Alberta is significant to the process of bringing attention to the needs of families. The consultation process has contributed to increasing awareness and has resulted in actions already being initiated in communities.

The Premier's Council has also developed a new publication, "Alberta Families Today," to analyze changing trends and continuities in family life in Alberta. The report includes a profile of Alberta families and refers to trends in marriage, divorce, parenthood, household chores, family work patterns, and family income patterns. The Council is working with all departments of government to promote the integration of this demographic information about families in their planning.

- **Coordination and Communication**

It is essential that we work together to create an environment where families can thrive.

In order to avoid unnecessary duplication of effort, make the best use of resources and to generate new ideas, the Council works in cooperation with provincial, national and international government and non-government organizations that have an interest in families.

The Council has also been working with the Indian and Metis communities, businesses, organizations, academics, and communities across Alberta to facilitate dialogue on ways to work together in supporting families. Further, the Council has established an Interdepartmental Committee on Family Policy, which will work under the ongoing direction of the Council, to coordinate government initiatives on behalf of families.

6. Next Steps

As noted previously, the Council has taken significant actions which will address some of the issues raised in this report. However, there is much more to be done and the Council is committed to ensuring that further action is taken. Currently, we are reviewing all of the identified issues and concerns to determine areas for immediate attention (see Appendix E). What can we as a Council do? What are the most effective responses that will make the biggest difference to families? Which areas need attention now...since we can't do it all? What can be referred to other departments for their attention and action?

We face a unique opportunity to create a more family-friendly province. It's a big challenge and the stakes are high. As a Council, we are committed to doing our part!

There are clearly areas that warrant public attention but we can't do it alone. The public debate and discussions have contributed significantly to expanding understanding of the issues facing families. Change happens when people understand a situation differently and see new possibilities. Through public debate and discussion, we have all gained a better understanding of issues and now we must look at the possibilities available to us and take the appropriate action.

Our discussions must not stop with this report. If changes are to be made, we all need to continue to be involved. Seeing communities undertake initiatives on the issues raised in community forums has been an exciting outcome of this process. Much more needs to be done and we need to continue to work together. We face a unique opportunity to create a more family-friendly province. It's a big challenge and the stakes are high. As a Council, we are committed to doing our part!

APPENDIX A
Questions To Focus Discussions

A. Cultural Values

- What do you feel is your job as a parent?
- What makes your job as a parent difficult?
- Is raising and having children considered important? How can we encourage recognition of this important role?
- To what extent are children valued by your community? by society?
- To what extent are seniors valued by your community? by society?
- Do you feel you have enough time for your family? What needs to be done to increase the priority given to family time?
- To what extent do parents influence the values and morals of their children?
- Roles of men and women - what are the issues for each?
- Does society value and support interdependence and sharing? How or how not?

B. Preventive Services

- If you wanted to use a preventive service, where would you go or where would you look?
- What preventive services are needed to support families?
- What do you think of support groups as a preventive service?
- What do you think of self-help as a source of support?
- Can we justify spending money on something that may help down the road instead of helping those in trouble right now? How?
- Are the right kind of services available to you in your community to support families to function as independently as possible? What is lacking?
- What sort of information is needed about services that support families?

C. Work, Family and Leisure

- What pressures do you experience in relation to your work?
- What can be done to help balance your work and family time?
- Can or should your workplace or job provide more support for your family? What can it do?
- What are the issues for women as they balance families and job responsibilities? For men?
- Are family and leisure activities emphasized and supported enough in your community?
- What are the problems in balancing work and family or leisure time? What can be done to solve them?
- What concerns are unique for farm families and for family operated businesses?

D. Coordination of Services

- Are family support services visible enough in your community?
- What are the difficulties in identifying these services when needed?

- Is there enough coordination among these services when needed? How can cooperation be fostered?
- What improvements would further assist families?
- Do you feel the mental health needs of children, youth and older adults in your community are being met?

E. Responsiveness of Systems

- What kind of issues are families facing when requesting services from government departments, organizations, community agencies and professionals (e.g., lawyers, teachers, school boards, social workers)? How are families treated when asking for help?
- To what extent are you encouraged to participate in discussions that affect you?
- Are there policies that work against families? How? What are they?
- Do the existing services respond to your family's specific needs?
- Do services recognize changing family realities?
- Are there prejudices among professional groups that hurt your family's ability to function effectively?

F. Community Support of Families

- What do you think your community does to support and strengthen families?
- In what ways do you think your community can improve its support?
- Are there sufficient social activities, learning opportunities and support groups for women, youth, children, seniors and others in your community?
- Are families consulted and involved in making important decisions in your community?

G. Lifelong Learning

- Are there enough educational programs offered in your community?
- What types of learning opportunities are needed to help families (e.g., self-help, parenting skills, personal relationships)?
- What would motivate you to participate in adult education activities such as parent education, marriage preparation courses, etc.? What would prevent your attendance?
- Is sufficient attention being given by churches and schools to prepare young people for their roles as effective citizens, family members and parents?

H. Financial Health

- What are the economic concerns affecting families today?
- Are children being sufficiently prepared to meet the challenges of today and tomorrow?
- Are there sufficient supports for families experiencing financial stress (e.g., unemployment, divorce, ill health, child care)? What more is needed?
- Are there sufficient supports to help parents who choose to stay at home to raise their children? What are they? What is needed?
- What should be the role of the government in supporting the financial health of families?

APPENDIX B

Participant Profile of Albertans in the Community Consultation Process on Family Issues

1. **Airdrie:** 24 participants, and 1 written response
   No gender breakdown provided

2. **Drumheller/Three Hills/County of Wheatland:**
   70 participants
   No gender breakdown provided

3. **Calgary:** 770 participants involved in 86 groups
   No gender breakdown provided

4. **Camrose:** 58 participants
   35 women, 19 men, 4 not ascertained

5. **Castor/Coronation:** 10 participants, including forum organizers and facilitators.
   No gender breakdown provided

6. **Czar:** 36 participants
   25 women, 10 men, 1 not ascertained

7. **Edmonton:** 207 participants involved in 29 groups and an agency forum
   185 women, 27 men, 193 parents

8. **Fort McMurray:** 42 participants, and 43 survey respondents
   28 women, 14 men

9. **Grande Prairie/Sexsmith/Valleyview/County of Grande Prairie:**
   103 participants involved in 7 groups
   70 women, 33 men, of these, 43 are parents,
   and 25 are students

10. **Hanna/Youngstown:** 33 participants, 26 women, 7 men

11. **High Level:** 40 participants, and 20 survey respondents

12. **High Prairie:** 65 participants, and 40 survey respondents
    No gender breakdown provided

13. **Killam:** 35 participants
    25 women, 10 men

14. **Lethbridge/ Pincher Creek:** 173 participants
No gender breakdown provided

15. **Medicine Hat/Brooks/Bow Island/Dunmore:**
127 participants
79 women, 48 men, 112 parents

16. **Okotoks:** 38 participants, and 10 survey respondents
No gender breakdown provided

17. **Peace River:** 15 participants, and 7 survey respondents
11 women, 4 men

18. **Red Deer:** 75 participants involved in 43 groups
(9 forums, 6 urban, 28 rural)
No gender breakdown provided

19. **Stettler:** 35 participants
22 women, 13 men, 32 parents

APPENDIX C

Number of Discussion Groups Throughout Alberta*

NAME OF COMMUNITY	# OF DISCUSSION GROUPS
Airdrie	1
Bow Island	1
Brooks	1
Calgary	86
Camrose	1
Castor/Coronation	1
City of Grande Prairie	4
County of Grande Prairie	1
Czar	1
Edmonton	29
Fort McMurray	1
Hanna/Youngstown	1
High Prairie	1
High Level	1
Killam	1
Lethbridge	1
M. D. of Cyprus	1
Medicine Hat	1
Okotoks	1
Peace River	1
Pincher Creek	1
Red Deer	43
Sexsmith	1
Stettler	1
Valleyview	1
Wheatland/Three Hills/Drumheller	1
Others (Direct submissions to Council)	21
TOTAL NUMBER OF DISCUSSION GROUPS IN THE COMMUNITY CONSULTATION	**205**

APPENDIX D

Submissions to the Premier's Council by Albertans in the Community Consultation Process on Family Issues

1. Input to Consultation Process For Consolidation into Final Report

A. Community Reports (19)

1. Airdrie, *Celebrating Families Forum Final Report*, June 1, 1991
2. Calgary Steering Committee, *Speaking Out: Families and the Future*, January, 1992
3. Camrose, *Camrose Family Forum*, November 20, 1991
4. Castor/Coronation, *Family Forum Report*, October 28, 1991
5. Czar, *Final Report: Czar Family Forum*, November 16, 1991
6. Edmonton Steering Committee, *Final Report of Community Consultations*, February 14, 1992
7. Fort McMurray, *Families and the Future Final Report*, November 12, 1991
8. Grande Prairie, *Grande Prairie Report*, December 20, 1991
9. Hanna, *Final Report: Youngstown/Hanna Family Forum*, April 27 & May 25, 1991
10. High Level, *Summary Report: "Families in the Future"*, November 26, 1991
11. High Prairie, *Final Report: Focus on the Family Forum*, November 27, 1991
12. Killam, *Family Forum*, November 18, 1991
13. Lethbridge, *Summary of Discussions: Forum on the Family*, November 20, 1991
14. Medicine Hat, *A Report on Family Forums in Southeastern Alberta*, October, 1991
15. Okotoks, *The Foothills Family Forum and Snowflake Festival: Final Report*, November 16, 1991
16. Peace River, *Focus Group Discussion*, November 27, 1991
17. Red Deer, *Community Consultation Process: Final Report, Volume I & II*, December 19, 1991
18. Rockyford, *Rockyford Family Forum*, June 5, 1991
19. Stettler, *Stettler Forum Report*, November 27, 1991

B. Special Forum Reports (2)

1. *Forum on Indian and Metis Families*, November 4, 1991
2. *Visions of the Future for Families in Alberta: Non Government Organizations Forum*, September 5, 1991

C. Discussion Guide Responses (21)*

1. Family Support Services, Peace River
2. Heinsburg Community School, Heinsburg, St. Paul
3. St. Peters Catholic Women's League, Milk River
4. FCSS Parent Group, Fairview
5. St. Anthony's Catholic Women's League, Lloydminster
6. St. Edmunds Catholic Women's League, Edmonton
7. St. Michael-Resurrection Parish Catholic Women's League, Edmonton
8. Men's Luncheon Group, Strathcona Place Rec. Centre, Edmonton
9. St. Gregory's Catholic Women's League, Holden
10. Grande Cache Catholic Women's League, Grande Cache
11. St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Women's League, Toefield
12. Deanna Jorgensen, Edmonton
13. St. Agnes Catholic Women's League, Edmonton
14. Ralph Wilhelm, Edmonton
15. Bette Gray, Stony Plain
16. St. Agnes Parish, Edmonton
17. Coutts Catholic Women's League, Coutts
18. Edmonton Jasper Place Liberal Association, Edmonton
19. Hope Lutheran Church, Edmonton
20. Women of the Metis Nation, Edmonton
21. Alberta Council of Womens Shelters, Edmonton

*Note: This does not include those responses also sent to local planning teams for incorporation into community reports.

D. **Letters or Briefs (75)**

1. Laurie Quist, Rimbey
2. Mildren Huff, Calgary
3. Walter Strom, Bow Island
4. Hinton Community Services, Hinton
5. Cathy Smith, Medicine Hat
6. Gert Kolodychuk, Olds
7. Rev. Thomas Koetch, Sacred Heart Parish, Gibbons
8. Rev. Albert Laisnex, St. Agnes Parish, Edmonton
9. Vicki Clarke, Innisfail
10. Eileen Walker, Strathmore
11. Anne MacIsaac, Edmonton
12. Sharon Semanision, Calgary
13. Rosa Weber, Castor
14. Respondent, Alix
15. Sonya Grupma, Lethbridge
16. Jim Maloney, Lacombe
17. Mr. & Mrs. Dave Kirschner, Fort McMurray
18. Rev. Lee Bell Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada, Edmonton
19. Lois Peressini, St. Mary's Catholic Women's League, Red Deer
20. Wayne Terrif, Superintendent of Schools, Crowsnest Pass, Blairmore
21. Mr. & Mrs. Pilling, Mountainview
22. Meg Norris, Innisfail
23. Larry Phelps, Lacombe
24. Mr. and Mrs. Pat Hollingsworth, Lacombe
25. Guri Opstad, Edmonton
26. Dr. R. Louise Smythe, Fort McMurray
27. Terra Association, Edmonton
28. Roy Piepenburg, Edmonton
29. Dr. Huddleston, Red Deer College, Red Deer
30. Edmonton Social Planning Council, Edmonton
31. Marilynn McCarrol, Rosalind
32. Caroline Lohner, Rosalind
33. County of Lethbridge No. 26 Board of Education, Lethbridge
34. Transcript of the Ron Collister Show, CJCA Radio, with Stockwell Day

35. J. Vosniak, Red Deer
36. Calgary Association of Women and the Law, Calgary
37. Respondent, Unknown
38. Donna Holley, Edmonton
39. Respondent, Edmonton
40. A. Rudolph, Medicine Hat
41. Barb Stewart, Edmonton
42. Pennilynn Leggett, Calgary
43. Steve Harmer, Calgary
44. McMann Youth Services Association, Unknown
45. Ivy M. Lefebvre, Edmonton
46. Dorothy Clancy, Edmonton
47. Mrs. M. Miller, Edmonton
48. Mrs. Jeanette Johnson, Bentley
49. Canadian Organization of Small Business Inc., Edmonton
50. Respondent, Unknown
51. Marilyn Snow, South Peace Regional Long Term Care Single Point of Entry Committee, Grande Prairie
52. Fran Uhryn, Southeastern Alberta Health Unit, Medicine Hat
53. Donna V. Nairn, Calgary
54. Eileen Carless, Red Deer
55. M. Peacock, Rimbey
56. Canadian Grandparents' Rights Association, Calgary
57. Dene Tha' Tribal Administration, Assumption
58. Edmonton Business and Professional Women's Club, Edmonton
59. Transcript of CBC Radio's Wild Rose Forum, Province-wide
60. Olive C. Frenette, Red Deer
61. Evelyn Bonertz, Red Deer
62. Edmonton Family Violence Treatment Education and Research Centre, Edmonton
63. Jean Seiferman, Red Deer
64. Dawna M. Barby, Calgary
65. Corinne Koleba, Edmonton
66. Communities for Children of Southern Alberta Society, Calgary
67. Sharon Fehr, Rimbey
68. Dolores Andressen, Catholic Women's League, St. Albert

69. Alberta Federation of Women United for Families, Edmonton
70. Beth Schmidt, Three Hills
71. Peggy Robbins, Edmonton
72. Calgary Catholic Immigration Society, Calgary
73. Parkinson's Society of Southern Alberta, Calgary
74. Learning Disabilities Association of Alberta, Calgary
75. Volunteer Centre of Calgary, Calgary

E. Discussion Guide Responses and Written Submissions*
(Input received by local planning teams)

Airdrie (1 response)
Jane Upham

Camrose (1 response)
Marjorie and Harvey Nahirniak

Calgary (86 responses)
Les and Dot Adamache
Alberta Home Economics Association, Calgary Branch
Alberta Mental Health Association
Alberta Vocational College, Forestlawn Evening Class
Alberta Vocational College, ESL Conversation Class (3)
F. Forbes Anderson
Aunts at Large
Joanne and Werner Bartel
Boys and Girls Clubs of Calgary
Calgary Family Service Bureau

*Note: This includes written responses sent to the local planning teams for incorporation into community reports and special discussion groups held in addition to the Community Forums. Some of these submissions may have also been sent directly to the Premier's Council.

Cambyr Agencies, Integro Youth Counselling Services, Richmond Family Services, Caliber Family Services, and Calgary Board of Education
Canadian Grandparents Rights Association
Centre for Income Security and Employment
Communities for Children
Connaught Community School Coordinating Committee (4)
Connaught Community Resource Committee
Council of Sikh Organizations Community Group
Cross Cultural Children's Group
Renee D'Amour
Jackie Elliott
Employment Futures Agency
Ernest Morrow Jr. High School Parents Advisory Council
Falconridge Elementary School Parent Advisory
Family Education and Support Group for families of People with Schizophrenia
Family Cluster Group of St. John's Parish
Foothills Academy Parents Association
Greater Forest Lawn Multi-Faith Collective
Yvonne Gusdal
Healthy Calgary Group
Hillhurst/Sunnyside Cooperative Playschool
Hillhurst/Sunnyside Community School Advisory Council
Holy Cross School parents (2)
House of Jacob Synagogue
Informal gathering of women colleagues
Jewish Family Service (2)
John Howard Society Staff
Kids Today School Age Society
Donna Kiffiak
Kim Krasselt
James and Maureen Laurence
Marie Lavoie
Annette Le Faive
Lesbian Information Line

Lesbian Mothers Defence Fund
Living Way Church
Andre N. Mamprin/Mark. G. Hibbard, Niquest Equities Corporation
Jim Martland
B. Millar
Cheryl Morrison
Mothers Who Care
Jeannie Neidersteiner
"Nobody's Perfect"
Office Assistance Education Students
Parent Aid Program
Parent Support Organization Alumni
Parent Child Centre/Observation Nurseries
Parents Support Group, University of Calgary, Women's Centre
E. Diane Pask, University of Calgary, Faculty of Law
Pastoral Institute (5)
Public at large, members of gay/lesbian community
George Quesada
Greg and Shannon Ryan
Richmond/Knobhill Community Association
Rick Smith
Rev. Janice Stevenson, United Church
S. Alberta Chapter of Canadian Association of Narcolepsy
South Calgary Community Church Fellowship Group
St. Anthony School, Further Education Centre
K. Simpson
Leslie Stroeder
Sunnyside Community School Parent Association
United Church Women
Maureen Wagner
Gail Wait
Marion Wolff

Edmonton (29 responses)

Baby Talk, Castle Downs Health Centre
Caernarvon Parent Support Centre (2)
Crestwood Presbyterian Church
Duggan School Parent's Quality Circle
EACER
Edmonton Local Council of Women (2)
Edmonton Working Women, The Alberta Status of Women Action Committee
Edmonton Autism Society
Family Service Assocation of Edmonton
Gateway Association for Community Living
The Junior League of Edmonton
Lago Lindo Parents Advisory Council
Millwoods P.A.T.C.H. Place Society of the Support and Education of Families
Mom's Break, St. Albert United Church
Mom's Great Escape, Grant MacEwan Community College
Mount Zion Lutheran Church
New Mom's Group, Millbourne Health Centre
Parent's Place, St. Albert
Planned Parenthood Staff
Raj Bansal
St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church
Strathcona County Further Education Council
Strathcona Presbyterian Church
Victoria Day Care
Westend Interagency Group
Westwood Church Religious Education committee
Woodcroft Health Centre

Grande Prairie (4)

Career and Life Management class, Grande Prairie Composite High School
Counsellors, Grande Prairie Composite High School
New Beginnings Group at Odyssey House
PACE Group

Red Deer (34 responses)

Alix Action Youth, Alix
Care For the Caregiver, Sunnybrook United Church, Red Deer
Delburne Youth Group, Delburne
Drop-In Discussion Group (My Occupation is Mom), Family Resource Centre, Red Deer
F.C.S.S., Didsbury
High School Parent Advisory Group, Didsbury
Jackson Women's Institute Group, Didsbury
Lacombe Unifarm, Lacombe
Lacombe Network Group, Lacombe
Lacombe Community, Lacombe
Lacombe Community Network, Lacombe
Lindsay Thurber Comprehensive High School Parent Teacher Council, Red Deer
Local Discussion Group, Red Deer Remand Centre, Red Deer
Janice McGregor Discussion Group, Lacombe
Mirror Community Hall, Mirror
Mom's Time Out, Didsbury
MOMS-Morning Out For Moms, United Church, Lacombe
Nelson Elementary School, Lacombe
Penhold Group (The Clubhouse), Penhold
Red Deer Forum District Organizing Committee, Rimbey
Single Mom's Discussion Group, Youth and Volunteer Centre, Red Deer
Single Mom's Drop-in Support Group, Family Resource Centre, Red Deer
St. Andrews United Church-U.C.W. Group, Lacombe
Sundre Community Members, Sundre
Sundre High School, Grade 11 Social Studies Class, Sundre
Henry Vandermeer Discussion Group, Rimbey

Peace River (1)

Peace River Women's Group

2. Background Information
(Input received separate from Consultation Process)

A. Federal Briefs

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Edmonton Inter-Agency Committee on Elder Abuse. (1989). *Brief to the Honourable John Oldring, Minister of Family and Social Services.* Edmonton Alberta.

Family and Community Support Services Association of Alberta. (1991). *Family and Community Support Services (F.C.S.S.) Final Report of the F.C.S.S. Ministerial Review Panel.* Edmonton, Alberta.

Family and Community Support Services Association of Alberta. (1989). *Recommended Initiatives to Enhance Family Life in Alberta.* Edmonton, Alberta.

Family Service Association of Edmonton and The Income Security Action Committee. (1991). *Working Hard/Living Lean: A Qualitative Study of Working-Low Income Families in Edmonton.* Edmonton, Alberta.

Freeman, Gordon. (1991). Brief submitted to the Honourable Ralph Klein, Minister of the Environment. Edmonton, Alberta.

Land, Iris. (1991). Brief presented to the Northern Alberta Development Council. Manning, Alberta.

McMan Youth Services Association. (1991). *Annual Report 1990-91.* Edmonton, Alberta.

Premier's Council in Support of Alberta Families. (1991). Briefing note accompanying research on Child Sexual Abuse Statistics & Child Sexual Abuse Programs. Edmonton, Alberta.

Stettler Town Council. (1991). Brief submitted to Don Tannas, MLA, Chairman F.C.S.S. Review Panel. Stettler, Alberta.

Wetolka Health Unit. (1990). *Building Our Future: Wetaskiwin in Motion*. Wetaskiwin, Alberta.

C. Letters

Brian Brown
Lynn Carr
Susan G. Huygen
Phil Martins
Don Mazankowski
Reg Oligny
Gerald B. Robertson

APPENDIX E

Key Priorities for the Premier's Council

Initiative One: The Reaffirmation of Family Values

Issues	Sub-Issues	Some Suggested Strategies
1. Influences on Families		
A. Mass Media/advertising	• promote "family-friendly messages • increase morality and positive images and ideas	
B. Educational System	• introduce a value-based curriculum • encourage a greater parental role in education	
C. Societal Values	• promote a reconnection with purpose • reduce the importance of materialism and status • promote the value of children and seniors • ensure an appropriate definition of family	
2. Roles and Responsibilities		
A. Nurturer	• acknowledge the value, importance and contribution of parenting • provide greater support, recognition, and respect for stay-at-home mothers	
B. Provider	• increase the ability of a single income to meet basic family needs	
C. Contributor	• increase the importance of personal responsibility and contribution to others	
3. Balanced Lifestyles		
A. Quality Time	• reduce competing demands on the time of family members • create a universal day of rest each week	
B. Family Leisure	• encourage more family-focussed activities • increase availability and access to facilities	

Issues	Sub-Issues	Some Suggested Strategies
4. Flexible Workplace		
A. Alternative Arrangements	• promote flexible hours, job sharing, working at home, part time employment with benefits, shorter work week	
B. Workplace Sensitivity	• recognize demands placed on working parents to attend to family needs	
5. Child Care		
A. Availability	• ensure adequate, affordable access for families	
B. Quality	• increase staff training, and security of environment	

Initiative Two: The Promotion of Families

Issues	Sub-Issues	Some Suggested Strategies
1. Wellness		
A. Communities	• build on community strengths in promoting the development of healthy families	
B. Families/Individuals	• build on strengths within families in promoting family life and family values • promote personal responsibility in regards to lifestyle choices • build on self-esteem in all family members	
2. Prevention		
A. Family Life Education	• prepare individuals for relationships, marriage, parenting, life skills	
B. Health & Lifestyle Education	• build on strengths within families in promoting family life and family values • build self-esteem in all family members	
C. Program Delivery & Effect	• provide opportunities for learning in innovative and imaginative ways • evaluate preventive programs for their impact	
3. Competence		
A. Academic, Social Skills	• improve liter communication skills	
B. Occupational Skills	• provide trans...ble and practical job skills	
C. Barriers to Education	• reduce or eliminate obstacles to the availability and accessibility of education	
4. Fairness		
A. Taxation Policies	• equal treatment for married and common-law families	
B. Subsidy Policies	• equal treatment for working mothers and stay-at-home mothers in child care, benefits	

Issues	Sub-Issues Some Suggested	Strategies
5. Support and Empowerment		
A. Low Income Families	• increase minimum wage, training opportunities • provide transitional support towards self-reliance	
B. Lone-parent Families	• provide pay equity, benefits, child care	
C. Stay-at-home Parents	• provide financial support--pensions, benefits, tax incentives, income • provide workplace support--work alternatives and extended nurturance leave, without penalty	
D. Divorced Families	• provide support for parents with custody, non-custodial parents, grandparents, and others affected by family breakdown	
E. Immigrant Families	• provide immigrant families with transitional support towards self-reliance	

Initiative Three: Structural Changes to Meet Family Needs

Issues	Sub-Issues	Some Suggested Strategies
1. Awareness of Access		
A. Awareness of Services	• promote highly visible, easily identified services • improve assistance, referral mechanisms	
B. Access to Service	• simplify access with a single point of entry	
2. Equality and efficiency		
A. Equality of Access to Service	• eliminate deficiencies, gaps in service • improve access to service in rural areas • review funding to special interest groups	
B. Efficiency of Service	• reduce waste, duplication, cross purposes through better coordination and communication between service providers • increase holistic services in family support • increase consolidation of family services	
3. Responsiveness		
A. Timely Response	• provide more immediate response to family crisis	
B. Adequate Response	• provide adequate resources for crisis intervention and long-term support needs • provide increased support for victims and treatment for perpetrators of abuse in families • provide increased support for pregnant teens and teenaged parents	

Issues	Sub-Issues	Some Suggested Strategies
4. Individualized service		
A. Customer-Focused Service	• develop flexible systems which respond to individual needs • encourage greater client participation in service • ensure services are made available to all who legitimately require assistance	
B. Open Communications	• provide easily understood information regarding rights and entitlements to service	
C. Professional Involvement	• ensure client care, respect, and dignity • involve community in the hiring of professionals to reflect values, standards, distinct cultures	
5. Community involvement		
A. Community-based service	• encourage local service delivery which responds to local needs as identified by the community • use paraprofessionals from the community	
B. Personal support systems	• encourage local initiatives, self-help support groups and personal networks to serve as extended family	

APPENDIX F

Community Planners

Airdrie

Brian Maitland
Candy Ashby
Holly Strand
Lisa Hawkins
Arlene Richie
Joyce Anderson

Calgary

Pam McAteer
Shannon Pitts
Faye Forbes Anderson
Lisa Casselman
Marilyn Day
Kath Franco
Don Karst
Karen Smith
Merrill Cooper
Lourdes de Sousa
Roy Kaufman
Carol Koopmans
Karen McDonald
Elaine McMurray
Martha Weber
Marion Wolfe
Frank Johnston

Camrose

Evelyn Nelson
David Samm
Diane Ploner
Jane Arial
David Saude
Kiernan Bonner
Anne Laskosky
Bonnie Schaffrick
Laurie Huolt
Louise Jensen
Sharon Magneson
Melanie Simmet
Shannon Ruzicka
Sharon James
Yvonne Allan
Ted Tymchuk
Shelley Edwards
Joan Carriere

Castor

Ruby Curran
Linda Lievers
Diane Brisbois

Coronation

Barbara Millar
Laura Lee Billings
Mary Ellen Norgard
Karen Gordon
Carmella Hutchinson
Connie Blair

Czar

Darlene Wolf
Cindy Morrow
Helen Nelson
Leaha Mattinson
Glynis Falloon
Cathy Charleton

Edmonton

Diana Grosenick
Sandra Konrad
Virginia Phillipson
Bruce Hogle
Carol Humphries
Carolyn Hooper

Fort McMurray

Lorna Townell
Glenda Hilsenteger
Iris Pasareno
Katherine Bentley
Carol Aubee-Girard
Madelaine Nixon

Grande Prairie

Kim Fenton
Lorne Radbourne
Judy Panko
Jean Rycroft
Janet Riendeau
Lynn Pack
Arlene Logan
Chris Henderson

High Level

Elaine Dextrase
Joanne Mitchell
Pat Chemago
Pearl Newman
Pat Kulscar

High River

Val Wiebe
Kathy Stott
Lorraine Gal
Patricia Ablett
Brenda Gieb
Shirley White
Sharon Davis

Killam

Glen Freadrich
Don Ruzicka
Ellen Frombach
Gail Watt
Verna Reid
Ted Archbold
Chris Nzszczyk
Lynn Hartwick
Bertha Rands
Cindy Cook
Anita Mayne
Vi Sloboda

Lethbridge

Fiona Miller
Nat Kozub
Connie Riedlhuber
Doug Shepherd
Sheila Jacobson
Lorraine Balderson
Mona MacGregor
John Beall
Lloyd Sereda
Barbara Spiess

Medicine Hat

Elmer Regier
Shirley Peebles
Mary Wilson
Katrina Durech
Keith Bender
Glenda Goudie
Rae Navartil
Gitta Hashizume
Stan Wiens
Catherine McCulloch
Lauretta Granberg
Dodi Barnard
Larry Bonneville
Frank Symons
Scott Cameron
Debbie Piper

Peace River

Barry Ellis
Brenda Stranaghan
Elaine Dextrase

Pincher Creek

Bob McLaren
Lorraine Weninger
Diane Burt Stuckey

Red Deer

Darren Hedley
Terry Crowe
Rick Matheson
Bill Stitt
Ken Murray
Marlene Stuckey
Stephen Golub
Leslie O'Hanlon
Noreen Spencer
Pearl Craig
Gillian Lawrence
Sandra Daniel
Sheryl Smith
Barbara Jeffrey
Colleen Jensen
Ernie Cebuliak
Lilianne Deschenes
Linda Yargeau

Rockyford

Diana Meller
Gwen Moggey
Ron Leaf
Dorene Slater
Cathy Bell

Slave Lake

Marie Saville
Rita Milner
Marie Lavoie
Leslie Grigger
Shelley MacDougall
Leonard Olson
Gwen Villebrun

Stettler

Betty Birch
Jean Gilbert
Lance Penny
Ron Truswell
Joan Bergstrom
Linda Care
Kay Dean
Gloria Bergman
Judi Beebe
Sherry Upton-Finkbiner